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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: SERBIA; IRAQ; NORTH KOREA

SERBIA

11. "A murder in Serbia"

The leading Globe and Mail stressed (3/13): "...We hope the world sees this [assassination of reformist Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic] more than just another in a line of troubles that have historically made the Balkans a powder keg. We hope its concern is for the country as it is today, for the reforms and constitutional rule taking shape, and the well-being of its people."

12. "Serbia's reformer, R.I.P."

The conservative National Post opined (3/13): "...Mr. Djindjic was a controversial politician who often had bitter disagreements with his own democratic-minded colleagues. But he will no doubt be remembered as a democratic hero. The best way for Serbians to avenge his death is to continue with Mr. Djindjic's political reforms and anti-crime crusade. As Mr. Djindjic himself noted in a tragically prescient interview following a botched assassination attempt against him last month, the death of the reformer need not necessarily spell the death of his reforms."

13. "Serbia's loss"

The nationalist Ottawa Citizen declared (3/13): "...Bringing lasting peace to the Balkans was already difficult. Mr. Djindjic's death makes it even harder."

IRAQ

14. "We should sit out this war"

Under the sub-heading, "U.S. credibility on Iraq has eroded to an extent that it is becoming hard to believe anything from the Bush administration," editorial page editor Haroon Siddiqui commented in the liberal Toronto Star (3/13): "...The Bush administration's staggering dishonesty can best be seen in the number of times the U.N. inspectors have had to shoot down its unsubstantiated assertions. Both Hans Blix and Mohamed ElBaradei are seasoned international civil servants who understand the value of non-partisanship. But they felt compelled to set the record straight.

First, Blix:

No, his inspectors were not spied on. No, the Iraqis could not have had advance knowledge of the sites to be inspected.

No, he did not think Iraqi agents were posing as scientists, or that real scientists were being whisked out of the country to avoid interrogations.

No, he found no evidence of Iraqis hiding or moving banned materials in or out of the country.

No, he did not believe that Iraq had cleaned up some sites before inspections, as Colin Powell alleged, using before and after satellite pictures that Blix exposed as having been taken 'several weeks apart.'

No, the trucks that Powell identified as mobile labs producing biological weapons were not in the germ warfare business; they were carrying food-tasting and seed-processing equipment.

No, Iraq had not hidden the long-range missiles that the inspectors ordered destroyed: 'These weapons were declared; they were not clandestine.'

No, he found no evidence that Iraq was producing and storing chemical or biological weapons in underground bunkers.

No, he saw no persuasive evidence of Iraqi links to Al Qaeda. 'There are other states where there appear to be stronger links.'

Now, ElBaradei:

No, there was no uranium bought from Niger. Documents purporting to show that were forged.

No, the International Atomic Energy Agency found no evidence that high-strength aluminium tubes were imported for uranium enrichment. Even if they were, it was unlikely that Iraq had the capacity to redesign them for such usage.

No, there is no evidence of Iraq using imported high-strength magnets in its nuclear program.

No, there is no evidence of a resumption of 'prohibited nuclear or nuclear-related activities.'

Despite being contradicted on so many fronts, Powell is now saying with a straight face that he has 'new

information' that Iraq is building new missiles as the inspectors are destroying the old ones. That's quite possible. But does anyone believe him, or America, any more? The evaporation of American credibility is a tragedy whose effects may outlast the war."

15. "Bush's so-called rush into battle is anything but"

Columnist Marcus Gee observed in the leading Globe and Mail (3/13): "- Rush to war? It has been 18 months since the 9/11 terrorist attacks, 14 months since U.S. President George W. Bush gave his speech naming Saddam Hussein's Iraq part of an 'axis of evil,' six months since he took his case to the United Nations and four months since he secured a UN resolution giving Iraq a final chance to give up its weapons of mass destruction. If this is a rush, it's hard to imagine what a crawl would look like.... Whether or not all the diplomacy succeeds, no one can say that the United States didn't go the last mile to get international support. Far from plunging into war, Mr. Bush has proceeded by careful, deliberate steps.... And if Mr. Bush doesn't get the UN majority and goes to war anyway? Well, at least no one can call it a 'rush to war.'"

NORTH KOREA

16. "North Korea shows how to make the U.S. temper its actions"

Columnist Jonathan Manthorpe wrote in the left-of-center Vancouver Sun (3/12): "...Because Kim is a real military threat and has neighbours - China, Japan and South Korea - of importance to the U.S., Washington has chosen to negotiate rather than attack. Saddam, on the other hand, has no nuclear weapons and might or might not be able to account for biological and chemical weapons stocks he might or might not have had.... Once you have nuclear weapons Washington will treat you with caution. So better get the bomb quick.... So the way the U.S. administration has handled the Iraq-North Korea dichotomy can be seen as promoting weapons proliferation rather than containing it.... It's not necessary to be on Washington's hit list to feel that in an increasingly uncertain world having a nice fat bomb stored in the basement might be a good idea.... An arms race in Asia is, of course, most likely to happen if Washington's allies feel the U.S. cannot be depended upon to support its friends as it has for the last half century. That development seems unlikely now, but who can tell what mood America will be in after its Iraqi adventure? Even without a spate of proliferation in Asia, the situation between the U.S. and North Korea is dangerous enough.... What Washington does not seem to have grasped with sufficient clarity is that Kim's North Korean regime is not house-trained. More than half a century of self-imposed isolation has bred institutional suspicion, paranoia and sheer ignorance about how the world works. Kim's paranoia roared forth when Bush declared a strategy of 'pre-emptive attack' on any country deemed a future risk to America. Washington discovered Kim's secret nuclear research last year, confirming its view

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that he could not be trusted."

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